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BLACK FL@G

Opinion: Some Thoughts on Transphobia

I've identified as a feminist ever since I was an angry teenager who felt I needed to add a few "isms" to my identity. Like just about every other aspect of my politics, it seems to be something which needs constant clarification. I am getting increasingly angered at certain schools of opinion within what could be considered radical feminist thought, which are not only exclusionary and divisive but that also, in my opinion, mirror patriarchy in many ways, including how they adhere to narrow, rigid definitions of gender. I am also beyond exasperated that we are still having these arguments in 2013. There's a lot that can be said about the lack of intersectionality within some parts of the feminist movement, but I wanted to share some thoughts on the arguments over transphobia which are raging within feminist discussion right now.

I grew up in the UK, and when the first Gender Identity Clinics were opened, the most vocal opposition came not from the religious or the right but from left-wing women who identified as radical feminists. This is not, however, the 1980s anymore, and I would have thought that people would have had ample time since then to educate themselves. There's barely a day goes by when there isn't a report about a transgendered person being subject to abuse and discrimination. As a section of society, trans people are far more likely to be subjected to physical and sexual violence than cisgendered people, yet I find it antithetical to feminism that there's still a stubborn school of thought which not only seeks to exclude trans people from this struggle but has also been party to extreme acts of vindictiveness and bullying, based solely on narrow, essentialist definitions of gender. When very high profile feminist women not only include transphobic rhetoric in their writings but also chose to publicly out trans people, putting them in real physical danger, I feel very aggrieved that this is being done in the name of feminism and challenging patriarchy. As far as I can see, no-one calling themselves a feminist has any right to that identification if they discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, even their own limited definition of gender. I am also getting increasingly angered that any attempts to engage this conversation, any disagreement, is framed as intimidation by trans people and their cis allies. And also, the suggestion from some quarters that any disagreement is an affront to feminist unity and we should stop bickering between ourselves and instead concentrate on fighting patriarchy, something which I see as an attempt to dominate the conversation and silence dissenting voices, makes me wonder about the value of unity with people who are happy to belittle and further marginalize groups.

There seems to be a prevalent thread of opinion that there are cabals of transgendered people stalking the bathrooms and changing-rooms of the world, seeking to predate on defenseless cisgendered people—the argument especially being that transwomen are seeking to violate the bodily integrity of ciswomen. It's not only blatant nonsense but it's an argument which has been heard before about other groups. It was crap then and it's crap now, yet transphobia seems to be a form of acceptable bigotry which is tolerated on the fringes of radical thought, using arguments about biology to justify it. Let's not forget that it was arguments about so-called "biological facts" which were used to justify racism, sexism and homophobia.

The radical feminists who peddle transphobia as part of their credo are clearly not anarchists

(Continued on page 6…)

Opinion: Decolonize Feminism

Womyn in the US didn't have the right to vote until 1921, couldn't serve on most juries until 1961, and are currently paid an average of 81 cents for every dollar paid to a male with equivalent qualifications. It is common knowledge that anarchism supports equality of gender and has large segments, especially within the anarcho-queer & anarcho-feminist circles, who believe that feminism should be a top priority. But *what kind of feminism*?

Hopefully most anarchists will sneeze at voting rights, jury duty, and rank in the pay system as being important. Part of what Western/white feminism perpetuates is a system of privilege from which it comes. White feminists continue to purport a system that grants 'rights' and subjugates people of color by trying to live up to Western patriarchal ideas of values without considering the origin of such values. For

(Continued on page 2…)

("Opinion: Decolonize Feminism" continued from page 1...)

instance, many practices, such as asking for the opinion of others before acting; viewing the Earth as sacred; nurturing the sick, injured, and weak; and caring for children are not regularly encouraged within white/Western feminism.
The Western feminist 'movement' has taken a path that affirms the system to the point that, rather than applauding those qualities that are derided in this culture as being "feminine" and therefore "weak," and advocating any-gendered or non-gendered people to practice them, it simply chooses womyn who embody more individualistic, capitalistic values to assimilate into the pre-existing patriarchal system. Ancient cultures (of black and brown womyn) that operated/ operate in a different way, with matrilocal and matrilineal practices, continue to be cast away and systematically exterminated by a patriarchal, capitalist, yet ironically *white feminist* society.

In Cheran, Michoacan, Mexico, the Purapecha womyn rose up against the logging industry and the Narco paramilitary (which were exploiting their land and killing their husbands and sons) in August of 2011 with sticks, persistence, and campfire vigils. The people of Cheran disposed the local police and mayor and have developed their own community police known as the "Guarda del Bosques" for the purpose of defending the forest from destruction. A main purpose of the new, autonomous radio station is to "challenge the prejudice and violence against womyn that has become so alarmingly present in the world."

Similarly, the uprising of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico was brought in large part by the participation of the indigenous womyn organizing their communities, marching, and then joining the armed struggle for the recognition of their right to co-exist with the land. Throughout the process of this struggle, it was necessary to develop a declaration of womyn's rights in order to facilitate the continued involvement of the womyn in the struggle. Included in the declaration are assertions to marital and reproductive choice. Yet, these womyn continue to value duties of raising children, providing for the family, and living in harmony with nature. While the struggle has served to blur roles, the struggle itself is based upon the protection of a "nurturing nature" which has been classified by the western world as "feminine." The womyn that are raising children are encouraged by the womyn who are a part of the armed component not to fight. This is because the importance of caring for the family and the

(Continued on page 4...)

My Thoughts on the Current Punk Movement

By mr_generico

Now this is not an article talking about which punk music has more influence. Nor is this providing any sort of "fashion advice." I will be mainly talking about how I see the current punk movement really lacking in actual involvement in current political struggles.

What I find interesting is when people wear logos of radical anarcho-punk bands like Sub-humans, Conflict, Crass, Aus-Rotten, Amebix, Doom, Discharge, just to name few. When you begin to interact with them on Anarchism or any current political struggle, they seem to turn a blind eye and tell you "I don't have time for that." I will get back to that a little later in this article after I address the problem with wearing old punk shirts for self-recognition

Now, one can argue that a person can choose what to wear and not represent the politics the band is promoting. Which is fine, but you should spend the effort to actually listen to the lyrics of these groups. Comprehending what's being said should make you want to go out and actually do something. What I tend to see now a days is people wanting to "fit in" for the sake of a scene. You shouldn't give a fuck about "fitting in" if you have the attitude of Punk. You should not even care if you have no patches, studs, bullet belts, Mohawks, died hair, etc. It's fucking aesthetics and doesn't mean a damn thing when it comes to actually getting involved with what is going on around you. I never had that look when I was younger, now I choose to dress how I dress. Was I influenced by the music and culture? Yes. Should you let it be the deciding factor of attempting to fit in? No. But I would fucking hope you understand the history, and have some sort of motivation to read the lyrics. Most people would appreciate you more as a human being who enjoys the music and has the capacity to carry a decent conversation on current politics.

Now in regards to people who seem to think it is a "cool" thing to wear a radical T shirt, but not even be remotely interested in the actual practice of anarchism, nor giving a shit about what that "hip circle @" you have drawn on your jacket stands for. I recommend you stop being a fucking hipster and pick up a few books. You may be shocked to learn something new. If after that if you still don't give a fuck, no problem. At least you took the effort to actually understand and comprehend. Not just wearing shit for the sake of fashion.

What I hope people get out of this short read is a little bit of insight into the punk movement. But to also be self-empowered to be a part of other struggles which are certainly connected to every human being on this planet. Whether people like it or not, punk music shaped the way

(Continued on page 3...)

("My Thoughts on the Current Punk Movement" continued from page 2...)

people view their government and society's norms that are continuing to be forced upon the new generation. I will end it with these lyrics from Aus-Rotten called "The System Works For Them":

"You know the system kills,
So you try to take a stance
BOYCOTT
You speak up for the people who will never get their own chance
BOYCOTT
But are your views sincere?
Do you practice that what you preach?
BOYCOTT
Or are you just fooling yourself,
The truth just out of your reach?
BOYCOTT
You're helping to enhance the rich while fucking over the poor
BOYCOTT
You've heard it all before and you know just what I'm saying
BOYCOTT
You hate these corporate killers but you fucking keep on paying
For the products you don't need
You share with them their fucking greed
And responsibility for those who died
Their exploitation and genocide
All the shit you fucking hate
Too blind to see that you helped create"

—mr_generico

Boston Marathon, this thing called terrorism, and the United States

By William Blum

The following is reprinted with permission from the author.

What is it that makes young men, reasonably well educated, in good health and nice looking, with long lives ahead of them, use powerful explosives to murder complete strangers because of political beliefs?

I'm speaking about American military personnel of course, on the ground, in the air, or directing drones from an office in Nevada.

Do not the survivors of US attacks in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, Libya and elsewhere, and their loved ones, ask such a question?

The survivors and loved ones in Boston have their answer – America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

That's what Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the surviving Boston bomber has said in custody, and there's no reason to doubt that he means it, nor the dozens of others in the past two decades who have carried out terrorist attacks against American targets and expressed anger toward US foreign policy. Both Tsarnaev brothers had expressed such opinions before the attack as well. The Marathon bombing took place just days after a deadly US attack in Afghanistan killed 17 civilians, including 12 children, as but one example of countless similar horrors from recent years. "Oh", an American says, "but those are accidents. What terrorists do is on purpose. It's cold-blooded murder."

But if the American military sends out a bombing mission on Monday which kills multiple innocent civilians, and then the military announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." And then on Tuesday the American military sends out a bombing mission which kills multiple innocent civilians, and then the military announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." And then on Wednesday the American military sends out a bombing mission which kills multiple innocent civilians, and the military then announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." … Thursday … Friday … How long before the American military loses the right to say it was an accident?

Terrorism is essentially an act of propaganda, to draw attention to a cause. The 9-11 perpetrators attacked famous symbols of American military and economic power. Traditionally, perpetrators would phone in their message to a local media outlet beforehand, but today, in this highly-surveilled society, with cameras and electronic monitoring at a science-fiction level, that's much more difficult to do without being detected; even finding a public payphone can be near impossible.

From what has been reported, the older brother, Tamerlan, regarded US foreign policy also as being anti-Islam, as do many other Muslims. I think this misreads Washington's intentions. The American Empire is not anti-Islam. It's anti-only those who present serious barriers to the Empire's plan for world domination.

The United States has had close relations with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Qatar, amongst other Islamic states. And in recent years the US has gone to great lengths to overthrow the leading secular states of the Mideast – Iraq, Libya and Syria.

Moreover, it's questionable that Washington is even against terrorism per se, but rather only those terrorists who are not allies of the empire. There has been, for example, a lengthy and infamous history of tolerance, and often outright support, for numerous anti-Castro terrorists, even when their terrorist acts were committed in the United States. Hundreds of anti-Castro and other Latin American terrorists have been given haven in the US over the years. The United States has also provided support to terrorists in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Kosovo, Bosnia, Iran, Libya, and Syria, including those with known connections to al Qaeda, to further foreign policy goals more important than fighting terrorism.

Under one or more of the harsh anti-terrorist laws enacted in the United States in recent years, President Obama could be

(Continued on page 6…)

("Opinion: Decolonize Feminism" continued from page 2...)

community, farming and living sustainably has not been lost in light of the struggle, but IS the struggle itself.

I do not wish to romanticize any one culture, but rather to point out some notable differences between our current Western society and those that are rising up to oppose it: mainly the anti-capitalist, "feminine" empowering cultures with a lack of emphasis on gender as essential to a person's role in society. It is necessary to note that many indigenous cultures frequently know of and revere more androgynous or non-gender conforming folks. These people are often looked to for guidance and are considered spiritual leaders.

While focusing on the "masculine assertiveness" of the womyn of Cheran, Chiapas, and many other indigenous resistance movements, many Western-thought feminists come short of recognizing the skills, responsibilities, reverence for the Earth, and perseverance learned through indigenous culture that are essential to such amazing Native feminists.

—Anonymous

Public education at stake: leaders and misleaders in the fight for Crenshaw High

By Yuisa Gimeno

The following article is reprinted, by permission, from The Freedom Socialist newspaper.

Crenshaw, an overwhelmingly Black and Latino high school in South Los Angeles, is on the front line in the national battle to preserve public education. The school was born out of the 1960s Civil Rights movement, when the community fought to get a public school in the neighborhood. Crenshaw is home to some of L.A.'s top academic awardees and athletes, as well as the first student-created cell phone app. Yet the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) calls the school a failure and is trying to destroy its community-based nature.

The District's divide-and-conquer tactics have separated many teachers and staff from the African American and Latina women who have defended Crenshaw for years. Principled collaboration between union workers and the community is desperately needed to save this vital community resource.

Killing a school to save it. Crenshaw has been starved of resources for years and rocked by constant upheaval — 33 administrator changes in seven years. Naturally, this neglect has caused graduation rates and test scores to drop. Despite this, the school began to claw its way back up, largely through collaboration between an innovative principal, teachers and the Crenshaw Cougar Coalition (CCC). The CCC is a grassroots group led mostly by women of color parents, and includes some staff, teachers and community organizations. Among the innovations were the Extended Learning Cultural Model and Social Justice Academy programs, which engaged students through culturally relevant, community-based education. Crenshaw won the 2012 Hoodie Award for Best High School, a national competition among urban schools.

Suddenly last October, LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy announced plans to "reconstitute" the school into three arbitrarily selected magnet programs. Under reconstitution, existing staff and teachers are forced to reapply for their jobs, and many are displaced.

In December, the district held a meeting on the reconstitution. An outraged crowd of parents condemned the plan because it would further destabilize the school, remove popular teachers and eliminate successful programs like the popular gifted magnet. Students warned that the reconstitution process has not bettered academic achievement at other schools and has worsened conditions. Parents got no answers about the fate of special education and English language learner students.

Parents launch a fight. The CCC had stopped district assaults on the school before, like the threatened loss of accreditation and attempted forced transfer of a popular teacher. The newly revived coalition invited RW, FSP, and other groups to join, and met over the winter break and weekly during the school year to strategize.

Their demands included: resources for the Extended Learning Cultural Model; not forcing staff and teachers to reapply for their jobs; providing money for social services, college counseling, positive behavior support, and parent engagement; and ensuring access, retention, and equity at the new magnets for current and future students.

They raised the demands at press conferences, picket lines outside LAUSD headquarters and the district's January board meeting. But despite compelling testimony against the plan from members of Crenshaw's first graduating class of '69, students, parents, teachers and groups like Radical Women and the Community Rights Campaign, the Board voted to reconstitute the school.

Fostering divisions. CCC-led protests had the potential to unite teachers, staff and parents. So the district worked to blunt their impact by announcing "Coffee with the Principal" meetings, promoted as opportunities to collaborate with the newly renamed "transformation." LAUSD invited participation in teacher selection interview panels. This drew people into their game plan without power to change the outcome.

To make matters worse, the teachers union, United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), scheduled and then cancelled a protest over the reconstitution. Intimidated teachers stopped attending CCC meetings. The district tossed out a Service Employees International Union (SEIU) representative called by staff who were being told they had to reapply for their jobs. The cops were called on a parent who tried to attend the same meeting.

The district had orchestrated a split between the teachers and parents and left the community divided among themselves. Public protest

(Continued on page 7...)

"Walking Down the Roads of this World"

By Michelle Cohen

To view more of Michelle Cohen's art, visit www.curiousarts.com

Community in the Activist Community

By Ariel Climer

It's a subtle edge of the butter knife
Working through fights until your embrace comes
Back and sits on both of your laps
A tornado soup of the soul
Jelly donuts and the most vegan dish
Admitting that you interpreted that
That way because of television
Because someone named your genitals
Claimed your genitals
It's diving in and almost drowning and
Then realizing you are a mermaid
Drying off
Becoming an entirely different being again
And again
With your self
On parade
It's living together. and it's transforming
justice
And if we all want each other to keep breathing
To honor each burstofanger, laughofjoy, tearinsecret
Keep your mouths moving
Your hearts growing
Your souls churning

"Levy"

By David Mesina

Caption: Pinheads in Washington

("Boston Marathon..." continued from page 3...)

charged with serious crimes for allowing the United States to fight on the same side as al Qaeda-linked terrorists in Libya and Syria and for funding and supplying these groups. Others in the United States have been imprisoned for a lot less.

As a striking example of how Washington has put its imperialist agenda before anything else, we can consider the case of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an Afghan warlord whose followers first gained attention in the 1980s by throwing acid in the faces of women who refused to wear the veil. This is how these horrible men spent their time when they were not screaming "Death to America". CIA and State Department officials called Hekmatyar "scary," "vicious," "a fascist," "definite dictatorship material". This did not prevent the United States government from showering the man with large amounts of aid to fight against the Soviet-supported government of Afghanistan. Hekmatyar is still a prominent warlord in Afghanistan.

A similar example is that of Luis Posada who masterminded the bombing of a Cuban airline in 1976, killing 73 civilians. He has lived a free man in Florida for many years.

USA Today reported a few months ago about a rebel fighter in Syria who told the newspaper in an interview: "The afterlife is the only thing that matters to me, and I can only reach it by waging jihad." Tamerlan Tsarnaev may have chosen to have a shootout with the Boston police as an act of suicide; to die waging jihad, although questions remain about exactly how he died. In any event, I think it's safe to say that the authorities wanted to capture the brothers alive to be able to question them.

It would be most interesting to be present the moment after a jihadist dies and discovers, with great shock, that there's no afterlife. Of course, by definition, there would have to be an afterlife for him to discover that there's no afterlife. On the other hand, a non-believer would likely be thrilled to find out that he was wrong.

Let us hope that the distinguished statesmen, military officers, and corporate leaders who own and rule America find out in this life that to put an end to anti-American terrorism they're going to have to learn to live without unending war against the world. There's no other defense against a couple of fanatic young men with backpacks. Just calling them insane or evil doesn't tell you enough; it may tell you nothing.

But this change in consciousness in the elite is going to be extremely difficult, as difficult as it appears to be for the parents of the two boys to accept their sons' guilt. Richard Falk, UN special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, stated after the Boston attack: "The American global domination project is bound to generate all kinds of resistance in the post-colonial world. In some respects, the United States has been fortunate not to experience worse blowbacks … We should be asking ourselves at this moment, 'How many canaries will have to die before we awaken from our geopolitical fantasy of global domination?'"

Officials in Canada and Britain as well as US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice have called for Falk to be fired...

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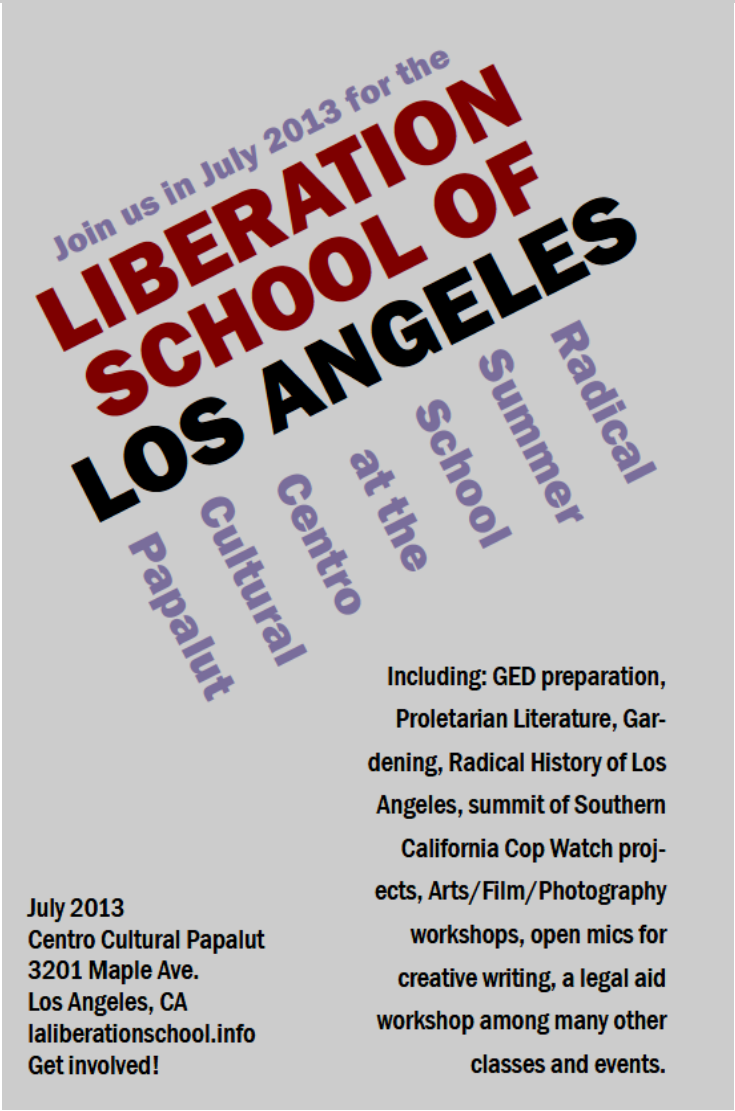
For more incisive commentary by William Blum, visit http://williamblum.org/

("Opinion: Some Thoughts on Transphobia" continued from page 1...)

and often have very authoritarian attitudes running through other aspects of their opinions, such as throwing in with the evangelical right on Prop 35, but that doesn't mean that their views should be ignored and go unchallenged. My personal definition of feminism is inseparable from my anarchism; it is the struggle for equality for all people within the context of the struggle for the abolition of both patriarchy and capitalism. As such, it is inconceivable that people should be belittled and excluded simply because their gender doesn't conform to the one they were assigned at birth. Feminism which condones such exclusion seems to be a sorry excuse for sisterhood to me. —Anonymous

A Thin Layer
By Ariel Climer

My green thumb is stuck
Deep in a slab of asphalt
I put it there when it was first poured
Out of curiosity
And cause my mom said "go out to play"
Tar soaks into my bloodstream, and I get headaches
The tip of my finger touches my other mother
She curls up inside my fingernail
Now long and thick
Like a root into her side
My brother comes
Drops a pick in my other hand
And I break the casing
The cage
The corset
Her belly is free
My thumb is free
I measure seed depth again with my liberated thumb
And teach others how not to throw out their backs
While wielding picks



The Liberation School of Los Angeles is a project that will run for the month of July 2013, in Centro Cultural Papalut (3201 Maple Ave. Los Angeles). During this month an autonomous collective of anti-capitalists (students, teachers, and working-class people) will hold a series of ongoing classes and one-time events that we hope will
be interesting and useful both for us and for anyone who would like to participate. Class topics will include: GED preparatory courses, Proletarian Literature, Gardening, and a Radical History of Los Angeles. We will also offer to host a summit of Southern California Cop Watch projects, open mics for creative writing, and a
legal aid workshop among other events. We also hope to learn to share the labor of teaching, learning, providing childcare and Spanish language translation, and keeping our space organized and our project running smoothly.

————————————————————————————————

Points of Unity

1. The Liberation School of Los Angeles affirms that in a space autonomous from the traditional underwriters of education (capital, religion, and the state) a diversity of methods of classroom self-organization will arise.

2. The Liberation School of Los Angeles actively resists the traditional gentrifying role of universities by holding space that is by for and about working-class Los Angeles.

3. The Liberation School of Los Angeles affirms the right of anyone interested to participate and actively seeks to eliminate barriers to their participation.

4. The Liberation School of Los Angeles encourages participants to take responsibility for all the different kinds of labor that are necessary for the day-to-day success of the project from childcare to classroom facilitation.

5. The Liberation School of Los Angeles recognizes the power of the political practice of caucusing (by womyn of color, queer and trans folks, womyn, and people of color) as the most successful way to prevent and respond to oppressive behavior.

6. In addition to autonomous spaces held by caucuses within the project all participants will be allies in some way.

7. The Liberation School of Los Angeles finds strength in the diversity of anti-capitalist political practices and ideologies of its participants.

—Liberation School

("Public education at stake: leaders and misleaders in the fight for Crenshaw High" continued from page 4...)

disappeared, replaced by indoor meetings where community concerns were sidelined. Some CCC members insisted the interview panels were mere window dressing, some grudgingly remained on them.

The Coalition was fragmented into three camps. Radicals and some parents wanted to fight publicly. Other parents, fearful of reprisals against their children, opted to "give the process a chance." Some influential Black leaders advocated participating in the panels because this fight was "about the students, not teachers." But the two are closely interconnected!

This truth was proved in April, when the district announced the results of the panels. Almost half the teachers were displaced. *Of 33 teachers rejected, 27 were teachers of color, 21 of them African American.* They averaged over 12 years of experience at the school. The Special Education Department, Extended Learning Cultural Model and Social Justice Academy were dismantled. LAUSD disregarded demands to re-open the library, hire a nurse, lower class sizes and provide therapists and more counselors.

Several CCC members and displaced teachers expressed outrage at the following "Coffee with the Principal." Parent leader Angie Parker declared, "LAUSD is committing educational homicide." But the coalition was split over whether to protest further.

Now what? Crenshaw's situation is precarious. To get the fight back on track and boost morale, the Cougar Coalition needs to resume its demands and public protests and reunite with students and staff. It needs to take on destructive high-stakes testing used as an excuse to starve schools of resources, and demand taxing the rich and corporations to fully fund quality multi-cultural public education.

UTLA and SEIU members need to pressure their unions to *defend* their members and the school. If the coalition reclaims its proud history, it can still win positive changes. Nothing else can.

Yuisa Gimeno is a long-time South L.A. resident and represents Radical Women in the CCC. Send her feedback at yuisa5379@yahoo.com.

Hello comrades.

As always, we, the members of the Free Association of Anarchists (F@@), look for new ways to resist state oppression by any and all means. Hence the Poor People's Media Campaign, also known as PPMC.

The aims and objectives of the program are to promote local community struggles and to link people with struggles that touch a nerve with them or catch their interest, anger, or indignation.

To help local community struggles we will, through humble actions, help set up websites, blogs, email listserves; participate in phone/email bombings; help with distribution of literature, creation of flyers, petition signing/gathering and creation, and the creation and uploading of videos to be spread through our network; and best of all, we will teach people how to make and use these simple tools of resistance.

To do this we need community participation.

How to Help:

1) Its' simple—keep us in the loop! What's going on and how can we help? That's what we are asking. Events to table at, literature for us to spread, press conferences to attend, and all that applies.
2) Join the network and help us spread the word on community struggles.

To Contact Us About Events Or To Join The PPMC Network:

Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/poorpeoplesmedia
Twitter: @poorpeoplemedia
Email: poorpeoplesmedia@gmail.com
Phone:(213)268-3508

Please Consult Our Founding Documents to understand what kinds of struggles we, the Free Association of Anarchists (F@@), will support. Founding Docs can be found at:

http://theanarchistassociation.wordpress.com/

—'Til Victory or Death

Life, Wage-Slavery, and the Pursuit of Happiness in the Land of the Free Market:

A Personal Note from Your Humble Black Flag Editor

Christopher Dorner. Newtown. Boston. Israeli airstrikes on Syria. Hunger strikes in Guantanamo Bay prison camp. Militant Marxist's bombing attack on a US Embassy in Turkey. Carbon dioxide levels creeping up to 400 parts per million. So much discussion-worthy conflict, violence, devastation, human suffering, and even, now and then, a little resistance–all brought on or made necessary by the intersecting oppressive forces of Capitalism, the State, hierarchy, patriarchy, racism, and countless other prejudices and chauvinisms—has occurred since we last published our humble newsletter. You can imagine that our network of hardworking and insightful Radical Leftie writers, scholars, and organic intellectuals has been just itching to get another issue of agitation and analysis out to our loyal and eager readership. And yet, dear readers, we come out with our Spring Issue terribly, terribly late, just on the cusp of summer.

Jobs (in some cases, more than one), children (in some cases more than one!), school (from community college to grad school), Statist legal oppression, capitalism-induced mental health issues, the dizzying burden of historical/traditional repressive structures—all of these issues, and many more, bear down, in varying combinations, on our collective, our friends, and our comrades. Sometimes it just gets very difficult, in this highly individualistic system that demands long hours and high productivity while offering little-to-no help, to publish a timely newsletter.

Which got me thinking about the lottery. I want to start by making very clear that I really don't support it. We all know that lotteries are an unacknowledged tax on the poor, exploiting people who are denied any semblance of a helpful financial/economic education with false visions of attaining the elusive "Amerikkkan Dream," joining the 1% and getting away from it all—typical mendacious dream-weaving of the worst capitalist kind.

But… setting those quite valid objections aside for a moment: Would anyone really want to get ahead in life by something so random, so hit-or-miss, as the lottery? In other words, can life achievements (of whatever kind) made possible by nothing more than vast sums of money, hastily and easily acquired, ever truly be one's own?

I used to think not. I remember debating this question with my college buddies. You see, in college I had these grandiose dreams of being a great Renaissance person, like Da Vinci or Schweitzer. I wanted to follow in the path outlined by Ezra Pound in his *ABC of Reading*, learning Provencal, Latin, Greek, and countless other languages in which I would read the poetries of the world and ultimately make my own heartbreakingly beautiful and revolutionary new contributions to *ars poetica*. This rarefied goal not being enough, I also wanted to climb the highest possible heights of the edifice of math and physics, in the sequence outlined by Gerard T'Hooft on his site "Theoretical Physics as a Challenge." I would spend my life contributing to arts and letters, science and philosophy, helping, in my own humble way, to bring joy, wonder, and edification to my fellow human beings. What stood in the way of these dreams was, of course, money.

How could anyone pursue such a demanding academic and artistic path if, day in, day out, we have to slave for hours on end just to survive, all the

(Continued on page 9…)

("Life, Wage-Slavery, and the Pursuit of Happiness in the Land of the Free Market" continued from page 8...)

while enriching our state and corporate masters? It's not the Renaissance anymore. There are no 21st century Medicis waiting around to sponsor genius, and even if there were, how could I, one person out of almost 7 billion, ever manage to catch their attention? It's a Catch 22: to have the time to achieve, you need patronage, but to get a patron, you need to already have achieved something of merit. And even college—in this age of soaring tuition, ravaging budget cuts, and increasingly corporatized pedagogy, standards, and curricula—doesn't provide the time or refuge. I had to work 3 jobs, at some points, just to make it through (and I had a full-tuition academic scholarship, for Christ's sake!).

So, in our more wistful moments, my artsy and intellectual friends and I would joke about ways of getting rich quick so we could pursue our loftier goals. Rob banks? Cook and sell meth? Play the lotto?

After all the joking was done, though, I always used to maintain that, to be a truly great person, one would have to achieve without unfair advantages or quick fixes; the struggle, I thought, was part of the journey, inseparable from the very mental and spiritual struggles required to be truly creative.

Now I'm not so sure. How many of the "great men" we read about in the histories of this or that discipline actually came up from nothing? I mean, there are some. Frederick Douglas, for example, or Thomas Edison. But a close look reveals that the vast majority of high-achievers, from Da Vinci himself to Darwin, from Newton to Austen to Dali, either came themselves from backgrounds of relative power and privilege, or were really good at getting people of power and privilege to sponsor them.

And isn't power and privilege itself a kind of lottery? As Michael Parenti has long argued, most people die in the same social class they were born into, and wealth is passed down through the generations (recall the abiding influence of the Rockefellers, for example). And think of all the countless needless deaths that have occurred, and continue to occur, in the Global South, the millions of beautiful minds blinked out by war, disease, and poverty without ever reaching their potential. What sin did they commit other than to be born in the wrong place in the wrong historical epoch under the wrong relations of production?

No doubt, under the yoke of illegitimate authority—Capitalism and the State being the chief elements of this yoke—all life is an unfair, undemocratic lottery, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing (nothing, that is, but the reproduction of this unfairness).

So in the final analysis, there'd be no dishonor in achieving great things with unearned money. The majority of great achievers undoubtedly have. Not that most of us have any real chance of winning the lottery—you're actually more likely to get struck by lightning, as most people well know.

No, I will likely never have the money, leisure time, or refuge to achieve my loftier dreams. But, by God (or by Anarchy), I will spend my life fighting for a world in which people will achieve theirs—a world, I hope, of dreams more beautiful, more daring, and more selfless than mine, a world in which people will live, love, and achieve, unencumbered by hunger, insecurity, or stultifying bureaucracy. And who knows? Maybe the sun hasn't gone down on me yet. One of the greatest anarchist rebels of all time was also, after all, one of the greatest renaissance over-achievers—author of 6 books, and hundreds of articles, on topics as diverse as film criticism and political theory, our black and red sister in arms, Emma Goldman.

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